

# THE EUGENICS REVIEW

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*"Eugenics is the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage."—Sir Francis Galton, 1904.*

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## NOTES OF THE QUARTER

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THE publication, elsewhere in this issue, of the Galton Lecture for 1947 provides a welcome occasion for the acknowledgment of a long-standing debt. Readers of the EUGENICS REVIEW have turned for many years to the contributions which have appeared in these columns over the signature of Dr. W. Norwood East. These abstracts and reviews, always scholarly and informative, always written with lucidity and grace, have reflected a humane and original outlook on criminological problems. For some readers they must have served as their chief guide to the literature on the psychological, legal and social aspects of crime and delinquency; and for some, no doubt, as their one source of scientific information on the subject. It is impossible to imagine that either group could have been better served.

There are many tenable views on what should be included in abstracts, and over the years there has been room in this REVIEW for an expression of them all. Dr. Norwood East's way with papers has been to distil their essence and to offer this with a brief judgment, sometimes explicitly stated, often implied, of their quality. In his reviews of books the mixture has been much the same,

but with the commentary rightly occupying a larger part of the whole. The many non-specialist readers who have found this material remarkably easy to follow, and have even possibly enjoyed the agreeable illusion that a subject so simply expounded must be pretty simple, too, may be reminded of the late Mr. C. E. Montague's wise aphorism that easy reading means hard writing. For the effort and skill that have gone to the making of these apparently effortless contributions we are deeply grateful; and we are glad to have the opportunity of expressing, however inadequately, our high appreciation of Dr. Norwood East's regular and unfailing service to the REVIEW and the hope that we may long continue to enjoy his guidance upon the problems to which he brings such unrivalled experience and authority.

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The Galton Lecture was concerned with those offenders who, though subnormal in intelligence, are not quite, in the statutory sense, mentally defective; or who, while not certifiably insane, display qualitative abnormalities such as psychopathic personalities or psychoneuroses. This non-sane non-insane group is socially dangerous, not only by reason of its size (which has been variously estimated as 5 to 20 per cent of the total number of offenders), or of the fact that it includes a very high proportion of persons liable to repeat their offences, but because its members, as Dr. Norwood East points out early in his paper, "often fail to make a success of marriage or provide a happy and healthy home, and may be considered therefore dysgenic apart from the possibility of transmitting character traits which result in criminality."

This is not the place in which to summarize the author's argument or his close analysis of the factors underlying criminal behaviour or involved in so-called criminal responsibility; and indeed if it were we should probably have followed our usual course when con-

fronted with the problem of abstracting criminological literature and handed the job over to Dr. Norwood East. But though the full text of his paper is available and should be read as a whole, we may in a short space say something about his recommendations and offer an opinion on some of their possible consequences.

Dr. Norwood East holds that the artificial restrictions imposed on offenders in ordinary prisons, even granted the many improvements which in recent years have been introduced into prison administration, are often ill suited to the peculiarities of the non-sane non-insane group ; and that for them the reformatory and deterrent aims of punishment could best be achieved in special penal institutions combining the features of a prison and a mental hospital, where training and specialized medical treatment could be given to those who do not accept such treatment when on probation or are too dangerous to be allowed at liberty. He goes on to say :

An annex to the institution administered on colony lines will give elasticity to the therapeutic and demophyllactic purposes of the scheme, and enable all the resources of mental treatment and character building to be given an opportunity to assist the offenders in the group. And since so much of the material—for instance the psychic inferiors—is of poor quality, exceptional care on discharge will still be necessary.

For this method of treatment the short sentences usually given—say in cases of exhibitionism and sexual assaults on young children—are useless. Sentences approximating the legal maximum may be required for the benefit of the offender and for public safety. I maintain that for these reasons we should not shrink from the imposition of longer sentences if necessary in order to ensure special treatment. Incidentally such sentences will tend to restrict fertility and have some eugenic value.

In this bold and imaginative proposal there are some advantages that call for special mention. In the first place, it would make for better diagnosis, serving to differentiate psychologically normal offenders who in error have been allotted to the non-sane non-insane group from those who really belong there. Secondly, it would offer an opportunity for cure in those cases in which the psychological abnormalities that place the offender in this group have arisen more from environmental stresses than from inborn

constitutional causes. This would apply in particular to those psychoneurotics who find themselves under an inner compulsion to commit, and to repeat, the acts that bring them within the law ; but in some measure it would apply also to mentally subnormal offenders, many of whom could be helped, by suitable training, to acquire economically useful skills within their limited capacity and so to adjust themselves to the strains of living in a complex society.

But perhaps the chief benefit that may be expected from this approach to penology is that it would, in time, provide a body of scientific knowledge on the psychological and social bases of criminal behaviour. What exactly is implied in such concepts as guilt and criminal responsibility—in the ability, upon which so much turns in law, to distinguish between right and wrong ? What can be learnt about the genetic constitution of offenders ; and if there are indeed criminal types, by what stigmata can they be differentiated from those criminals who, to quote Dr. Norwood East, “are so much like ourselves that we fail to detect anything criminal or unusual about them” ? It is hardly disputable that greater economic security and a general levelling up of moral standards, in the family, in the nation, and in international relations, would result in a decline of criminality. But when this position is reached—and we are sanguine enough to believe that it will be—will there not remain a hard criminal core, insulated by its inborn constitution from the moral influences of society, however favourable these may be to the evocation of those tender emotions that help to keep antisocial and aggressive impulses under control ? It is upon the basis of such knowledge that we may hope to discover how far eugenic principles could contribute, with other social agencies, to the elimination of crime ; and if for no other reason than this Dr. Norwood East's Galton Lecture should be welcomed as a most valuable and timely contribution to criminological literature.

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This issue, which begins a new volume of the REVIEW, is marked by a change of format for which we are indebted to Mr. M. Martyn,

production manager and typographer to Messrs. Hamish Hamilton, who took over the publication of the REVIEW on the termination of the *Society's* contract with Messrs. Macmillan & Co. in January 1947. To Dr. Blacker, to whom the whole credit for the suggestion is due, it seemed a suitable moment for the adoption of a new cover design; and indeed both the quotation and the colophon which compose its essential elements were proposed by him.\* The colophon, adapted from a plate in Karl Pearson's *Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, represents *Hyacinthus candicans*, to which, in 1880, Professor J. Decaisne of the Paris Museum of Natural History gave the name Galtonia. According to Karl Pearson few things gave Galton greater pleasure than this tribute; and we cannot help feeling that he would have approved the adoption of this beautiful hardy bulb as a symbol of eugenics.

The quotation stands out, even among Galton's writings, as one of the finest statements ever made about the aims of eugenics. In one of his essays Bertrand Russell defined the ideal incentive in all human relationships as love guided by wisdom. Galton saw in this association of heart and mind the motive force behind eugenics and the assurance that eugenic policies would be adapted in practice to their declared purpose. First and foremost must come the will to help mankind—the gift of pity and tender feeling; then the power, conferred by science, to give effect to that will by the prevention of many kinds of suffering; and finally, the wisdom to use that power, not only for our own age and generation but for the benefit of posterity, by substituting for natural selection other processes “more merciful and not less effective.” In our endeavours to these ends we must inevitably make many mistakes; pity and tender feeling may sometimes outrun knowledge; the wisdom to make the best use of what knowledge is available may sometimes be lacking. But as long as we are animated by the love of humanity that characterized Galton's life, and as long as we keep the same clear vision of our ultimate purposes, the errors will not be irreparable and eugenics

\* As the REVIEW goes to press we learn with much regret that, owing to production difficulties, the colophon will not be ready in time for this issue.

may yet prove the greatest force for good in our troubled world.

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Turning the pages of Karl Pearson's *Life* we came upon two of Galton's letters which, though written in 1910, are not entirely without contemporary interest. In the first, dated July 11th, he said:

A particularly good article in the *Westminster Review* on “The Scope of Eugenics,” signed by H. J. Laski, was sent to me among other Press cuttings. The name was unknown to me, so I wrote to him “Care of the Editor,” and hear from Laski this morning in a very nice, modest letter that he is a school-boy at Manchester, aged 17!! It is long since I have been so much astonished. The lad has probably a great future before him and he will make a mark if he sticks to eugenics, which he says has been his passion for two years. I as yet know nothing about him, but hope to learn.

The second letter was written on August 7th:

My wonderful boy Jew, Laski by name, came here with his brother to tea. Eva was out, but Miss Savile fortunately called and did the necessary. The boy is simply beautiful. She is an artist and quite agreed. He is perfectly nice and quiet in his manners. Many prodigies fail, but this one seems to have stamina and purpose, and is not excitable, so he ought to make a mark.

It would be interesting to know how Professor Harold Laski regards the views so brilliantly upheld by the schoolboy of thirty-seven years ago. He may at least be assured that if there are any who wish he had “stuck to eugenics” they are not necessarily his political opponents. We may indeed appositely conclude with a quotation from one of our early war-time issues (January 1940) which summed up this whole question of the relation between politics and eugenics:

Our common bond is not our politics, not our preference for more or less melanin in the skin, not our opinion about the best way to end international conflicts. Our conception of eugenics is not unnaturally influenced by the views we hold on these matters, but for many of us it would be truer to say that our views on these matters are in large part determined by our conception of eugenics. In the ranks of the *Society* there are members of all political parties. But for all their differences about the type of social structure that would ultimately favour the survival and fertility of those with the best biological endowment, there is sufficient accord among them to enable the *Society* to evolve the agreed policies that are published in its periodically revised statements of Aims and Objects.